Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address*: Mountain Water Company
   1345 W. Broadway
   Missoula, MT 59802

2. *Type of action*: Application to Change a Water Right 76M-30052087

3. *Water source name*: Groundwater

4. *Location affected by project*: NESWNW and NWSWNW of Section 17, T13N ,R19W, Missoula County

5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits*:

   Water Right Permit 76M-23029-00: Add two existing points of diversion consisting of well no. 41 located in the NESWNW Section 17, T13N, R19W; well no. 42 located in the NWSWNW Section 17, T13N, R19W, all in Missoula County, as additional points of diversion. The flow rate and volume authorized to be diverted from these additional points of diversion is limited to 1,150 GPM and 1,508 AF per year. The authorized flow rate and volume granted in this change is in addition to the 2,440 GPM up to 800 AF the applicant can currently divert from well numbers 41 & 42. Well numbers 36, 41 and 42 are manifold into the MWC central distribution system used to supply municipal water to the City of Missoula.

   The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
   (include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

   Montana Natural Heritage Program
   Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity *- Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

Determination: N/A – the appropriation is for groundwater

Water quality *- Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

Determination: N/A – the appropriation is for groundwater

Groundwater *- Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

Determination: No Significant Impact
The requested change in point of diversion will not result in an increase in diverted flow rate , volume, purpose or period of use for the overall Mountain Water Company municipal water supply system. There will be an increase in flow rate and volume pumped from MWC 41 & 42, however this increased pumping will not result in an increase in consumptive use because the Mountain Water Company service area, number of connections, distribution system and type of water use will not change if the requested point of diversion change is authorized. The water right will be used in exactly the same manner if the change is authorized with the exception of the location from where water is diverted. The Applicant provided groundwater aquifer drawdown effects in neighboring wells from increased pumping to show there will be minimal change in drawdown (less than 1 foot) to neighboring wells. The change in point of diversion will not result in a new appropriation of water that could affect groundwater supply. No sources of groundwater contaminates was identified that could adversely impact groundwater quality. No new impacts to surface water flowing in the Clark Fork River were identified. The pre-change use of well no. 36 resulted in depletion to the Clark Fork River. The amount of annual depletion will remain the same if the Department grants the change authorization, however the timing of depletions will change.

DIVERSION WORKS - *Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

Determination: No impact

The public water supply system operated by Mountain Water Company conforms to the Montana Public Works Standard Specifications and the Montana DEQ Circular DEQ-1, Standards for Water Works. Well constructions are compliant with ANSI/AWWA A-100 'Standards for

Water Wells', and the Board of Montana Water Well Contractors rules. The wells were constructed years ago and have been in use since. The proposed change in water use will not require any construction other than replacing the pumps in well nos. 41 and 42, therefore there will be no ground disturbance that could affect or impactsurface water sources, includingimpacts to channels, flow modifications and riparian areas. Depletions to stream flows will not result in barriers to fish migration in the Clark Fork River. The project does not involve any dams. The Applicant's groundwater modeling shows that the Missoula groundwater aquifer where the wells are located to be highly prolific with minimal drawdown from well pumping that could affect construction of future wells.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species *- Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

Determination: No impact
The Montana Natural Heritage (MNH) database was queried to determine if any threatened or endangered species, or species of special concern, are located in the project vicinity. According to MNH, the following sensitive species where identified as occurring in the same township and range as the proposed project site; Bald Eagle, Flammulated Owl, Fringed Myotis, Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout.

The proposed project location is in the greater city of Missoula, a rural to urbanized area that does not provide quality habitat for any of the listed species. The Clark Fork River is 0.3 miles south of the wells and is populated with Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout which are species identified as threatened. The proposed change in point of diversion will not result in any additional or new impacts to water availability in the Clark Fork River that could impact these species.

Wetlands *- Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: No impact. The proposed project does not create or impact any wetlands

Ponds *- For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: No impact. The proposed project does not create or impact any ponds

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

Determination: No impact

The proposed project will not cause degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability or moisture content. Water use in the greater Mountain Water Company area will not change as a result of this project. Domestic waste water is treated at the Missoula County Water Treatment Plant. The proposed project will not result in an increase in waste water discharge. Water application to soils consists of lawn and garden irrigation. The soils in the vicinity of the Missoula Valley consist of sandy loams. These soils are not susceptible to saline seep.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: No Impact
There will not be disturbance to the existing ground that could result in impacts to existing vegetative cover or cause the spread of noxious weeds.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: No Impact
Deterioration of air quality and/or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants is not expected.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

Determination: N/A
The Department only needs to address Historical and Archeological sites in the EA if the project is located on State Trust Land or Federal land. This project is not located on state of federal land and this section is not applicable

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: No Impact - All impacts to land, water, and energy have been identified and no further impacts are anticipated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

Determination: No Impact

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

Determination: No Impact - The proposed project will not inhibit, alter or impair access to the present recreational opportunities in the area. The project is not expected to create any significant pollution, noise, or traffic congestion in the area that may alter the quality of recreational opportunities in the vicinity of Missoula

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

Determination: No Impact

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
Yes___ No___ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: No Impact

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

(a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? None identified.

(*b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* None identified.

(c) Existing land uses? None identified.

(*d) Quantity and distribution of employment?* None identified.

(e) Distribution and density of population and housing? None identified.

(f) Demands for government services? None identified.

(g) Industrial and commercial activity? None identified.

(h) Utilities? None identified.

(i) Transportation? None identified.

(j) Safety? None identified.

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None identified.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts None identified**.**

Cumulative Impacts None identified**.**

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:***

No reasonable alternatives were identified in the EA.

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:***

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative None identified.

2 Comments and Responses

3. ***Finding:***
*Yes___ No_**X**__ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

AN EA IS THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF ANALYSIS FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION BECAUSE NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS WERE IDENTIFIED.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Kathy Schubert
Title: Water Resource Specialist
Date: May 7, 2013